

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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6-28-06

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name : **Grand Crossing Park**

other names/site number : **Park #15**

2. Location

street & number: **7655 South Ingleside Avenue** _____ Not for publication

city or town : **Chicago** _____ vicinity

state **Illinois** code **IL** county **Cook** code **031** zip code **60619**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _____ nationally _____ statewide locally. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William L. Wheeler *SH*
Signature of certifying official

6-28-2006
Date

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency _____
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

American Indian Tribe

Grand Crossing Park
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.		
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.		
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain):	_____	_____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u> 2 </u>	<u> 1 </u>	buildings
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	sites
<u> 6 </u>	<u> 2 </u>	structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 1 </u>	objects
<u> 9 </u>	<u> 4 </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District

Grand Crossing Park
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County and State

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE/ park

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ outdoor recreation

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ sports facility

OTHER/ field house

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE/ park

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ outdoor recreation

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ sports facility

OTHER/ field house

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Beaux Arts Classicism

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: **CONCRETE**

Roof: **ASPHALT TILES**

Walls: **CONCRETE**

Other: **EARTH**
VEGETATION

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation Sheets

Grand Crossing Park

Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Landscape Architecture

Entertainment/ Recreation

Period of Significance **1912 - 1956**

Significant Dates: **1915**

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) **N/A**

Cultural Affiliation **N/A**

Architect/Builder **South Park Commission**

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) **See Continuation Sheets**

Grand Crossing Park
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository **Chicago Park District**

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: **10.5 acres**

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting		Northing		Zone Easting		Northing	
1	16	449993	4622939	3	16	450181	4622544
2	16	450176	4622941	4	16	449991	4622537

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

Grand Crossing Park
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Julia Sniderman Bachrach

organization: Chicago Park District

date: March 2006

street & number: 541 N. Fairbanks

telephone: (312) 742-4698

city or town: Chicago

state: Illinois

zip code: 60611

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:
Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

- Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Timothy J. Mitchell, General Supt. and CEO, Chicago Park District

street & number 541 N. Fairbanks

telephone

city or town Chicago

state IL

zip code 60611

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Grand Crossing Park, Cook County, Illinois

Narrative Description

Grand Crossing Park is a 17.16 acre site located on Chicago's south side at 7600 South and 922 East. It is one of four parks, approximately twenty acres in size, that the South Park Commission began planning in 1907, within two years of the introduction of its revolutionary system of neighborhood parks. Land was acquired between 1907 and 1909, and the following year, nationally renowned landscape architects, the Olmsted Brothers, were hired to develop plans for all four new parks. Between 1910 and 1912, the firm developed plans for each of what were then considered parks #15, 16, 17 and 18. Grand Crossing Park consists of thirteen resources: nine contributing and four non-contributing. The contributing resources include two buildings, six structures, and one site consisting of landscape, ball fields and walkways, open air gymnasiums and other design features.

Initial improvements such as grading, fencing and the construction of temporary shelters and comfort stations were conducted in 1912, so that the public could begin using the four parks. In 1915, the construction of the field house for Park #15 (Grand Crossing) was underway. The building was designed by South Park Commission in-house staff rather than Daniel H. Burnham and Company, the firm responsible for all of the architecture for the earlier system of neighborhood parks. The large monumental building was clearly inspired by the collection of neighborhood park buildings that had previously been designed by the Burnham firm.

The design of Grand Crossing Park's landscape can also be attributed to South Park Commission in-house staff, though it strongly reflects the influence of the Olmsted Brothers. The park included all of the program elements that were first tested in the original system of neighborhood parks. These are the ball field, field house with men's and women's indoor gymnasiums; swimming pool; women's outdoor gymnasium near a children's playground and wading pool, tennis courts, men's outdoor gymnasium and running track, tool building, boiler house, and skating shelter.

By 1915, when the South Park Commission began making permanent improvements to Grand Crossing Park, numerous other neighborhood parks existed and many were then under construction in areas throughout Chicago, as well as other American cities. Grand Crossing Park was quite representative of the South Park Commission's neighborhood parks, which tended to include formal landscape elements and classically inspired architecture. This design vocabulary was different from the neighborhood parks of the West Park Commission. These tended to be extremely small, and often had Prairie Style landscapes designed by Jens Jensen and brick buildings that were also often rendered in the Prairie Style. The architecture of the Lincoln Park Commission's neighborhood parks also tended to include Prairie Style buildings, many of which were designed by Dwight H. Perkins. The site planning for the Lincoln Park Commission's neighborhood parks did not rely upon the strict organization or zoning that tends to characterize the South Park Commission parks. This is also true for many of the neighborhood parks of the nineteen additional park commissions, which had various recreational features loosely organized around an elliptical or irregularly configured ball field. The field houses, generally composed

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Grand Crossing Park, Cook County, Illinois

of brick and rendered in Prairie, Tudor, and Georgian Revival styles were quite different from the concrete Beaux Arts style buildings of the South Park Commission's neighborhood parks.

For over ninety years, Grand Crossing Park has continued to meet the frequently changing needs of its surrounding community and has also retained a high level of integrity. The park is very similar in design to Trumbull Park (Park #16), although the landscape plans of the two parks are mirrored, Trumbull Park retains a larger number of original trees. In order to clearly describe Grand Crossing Park and explain its integrity, three corresponding plans are submitted as part of this nomination: the South Park Commission 1917 General Plan [A], the Chicago Park District 1940 Topographical Survey General Plan [B], and a recent plot plan (1985) [C]. Features are numbered and keyed to all plans. In addition, recommendations by the Olmsted Brothers that were recorded in the minutes of a June 30, 1911, meeting of the South Park Commission will be referenced to help explain their influence on the park's design by in-house staff members.

Grand Crossing Park is bounded on the north by East 76th Street, on the south by East 78th Street, on the east by South Dobson Avenue, and on the west by South Ingleside Avenue. Rectangular in configuration, Grand Crossing Park's composition is divided in two halves following a line on center with East 77th Street. On the south side of the line there is a square ball field, on the north side are all of the park's other features including the field house, playground, running track, swimming pool, boiler house and service yard. This arrangement, which is well intact today [D], was shown in the 1917 General Plan for Grand Crossing Park [A] that is likely the original plan.

Although the Olmsted Brothers plans for Grand Crossing Park were not implemented, all of the elements commonly used in their designs for the fourteen original neighborhood parks were incorporated by the South Park Commission in-house designers. The symmetry of the elements, formal allées of trees planted in a monoculture are all treatments that were used in French Renaissance landscapes.

In the Olmsted Brothers' recommendations, they suggested that the park "should be enclosed in such a way as to shut out some of the noise and dust of the surrounding streets and to protect the park features of the interior."¹ Possible treatments to achieve this objective were fencing, trees and shrubs, or a raised terrace "as at the Tuilleries in Paris."² The Olmsted Brothers also recommended that the designs for parks #15 through #18 should include "promenades, groves, bandstand, sheltered seats, gardens, and possibly fountains, for quiet and rest and the gentler forms of amusements."³

The implemented design did not include any elements that were raised above street level, as some of the Olmsted Brothers plans showed; however, it did have a depressed ball field [1] surrounded by walks [2], perimeter plantings of trees and shrubs, and iron picket fencing at the north, east, and west sides. The walks [2] follow the perimeter of the park. At the south side of the park, there were originally short stretches of walks

¹ Minutes of the South Park Commissioners, June 30, 1911, v.16, p. 24.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

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leading into the ball field. In 1985, as part of a ball field renovation, these walks were replaced with black earth and sod. Today, the perimeter walks [2] remain in their original location and configuration. The ball field [1] retains its original topography.

At the south end of the field house, there is a formal terrace [3] that is semi-circular in plan. A drive [4] that was originally lined with a formal allée of trees leads to this central terrace [3]. The drive is located at the north end of the ball field, on axis with 77th Street. Historically, this concourse area [3] featured formally planted concert grove composed of a grid of approximately 90 linden trees. Today, only three linden trees survive. Sometime between the mid 1940s and early 1960s, the trees were removed. It is uncertain as to why the Chicago Park District removed them. There are some plans, dating to 1953 and 1954, for replanting the area with either American plain trees or pin oaks; however, they do not indicate whether the lindens existed at that time. Historically, the area was composed of macadam, a compacted form of gravel. By the 1960s, the area was paved with asphalt. Today it is used as a parking lot.

A concrete stairway [20] leads down into the depressed ball field. Historically, there was a concrete knee wall lining the upper terrace. Today, the square wall's concrete posts remain. (These may have originally had urns mounted on them.) The remnant knee wall is original historic fabric; however it is in poor condition. A flagpole was originally located just south of the stairway in the lawn area. The flagpole [5] was relocated to the north of the stairway, on the terrace area (now parking lot) sometime after 1960.

Many of the trees and shrubs around the perimeter of the ball field are now missing. Plans in the files of the Chicago Park District indicate that many of these plantings were removed in the 1950s. The original iron picket fence is also missing today, and it may have been removed during the same period. Fortunately, other historic elements are well intact.

The field house [6] was designed by South Park Commission in-house staff. It is possible that the building can be attributed to Linn White, who served as Chief Engineer, however, the earliest rendering, dated December 1914, bears the signature of Guy Wilfrid Haylor. [It seems likely that this name credits the rendering rather than the architectural design.] The building is identical to the Trumbull Park field house (park #16). In fact, only one set of construction documents was developed for both projects. Both field houses were constructed in 1915.

The Grand Crossing Park field house [6] shares some similarities with the 1904-1905 architectural designs by Edward Bennett of D.H. Burnham and Company for the original South Park Commission neighborhood parks. The building's monumentality and Beaux Arts style are reminiscent of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. The D.H. Burnham and Company field houses were designed as units with the buildings symmetrically grouped in complexes. The assembly hall and club room buildings were generally placed the center and flanked on each side by the gymnasium and locker room buildings. This created a monumental sense of entry, and also formed outdoor courtyards. Quite often the swimming pool was within the

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Grand Crossing Park, Cook County, Illinois

center of this 'outdoor room,' similar to the World's Fair's Court of Honor, a grand canal flanked by classical buildings.

Although the Olmsted Brothers had specifically suggested this arrangement for the architecture of parks #15 through 18 in their recommendations to the South Park Commissioners, the Grand Crossing Park field house was configured in a different manner. Cruciform in plan, the field house has a long gabled central building that extends north-south, bisected by a hipped roof building that extends east-west. Despite this deviation, influences of the Burnham firm architecture in this Beaux Arts style two-story building are clear. The Grand Crossing Park field house is composed of exposed aggregate concrete— sometimes referred to as "marblecrete," the building material of all of the earlier neighborhood park architecture. As with those buildings, historically the Grand Crossing Park field house was unpainted. The exterior walls revealed the natural pale gray color and bumpy texture of the building material. Classically derived architectural concrete details were molded into and applied onto the exterior walls. Today, the details remain intact, however, the building has been painted light tan.

The south façade, which faces the ball field, was the original entry into the building [6]. A concrete stairway leads up to an upper terrace. Concrete knee walls, similar to those lining the concourse, flank the stairs. Although the façade remains intact, this entrance is no longer used due to security issues.

The south façade is composed of a monumental rounded arched opening flanked by two pair of pilasters. The upper portion of the arch pierces the center of the pediment. The rounded arch has an ornamental keystone. Above the keystone, in the center of the pediment, there is an ornamental cartouche flanked by swags and wreath-like garlands. The gable has an overhanging eave with exposed rafter tails. Following the pitch of the roof, there is a cornice composed of three projecting bands. Two of the three bands are dentils. The lowest band is solid with simple projecting trim. The paired pilasters are fluted and are applied to projecting surrounds. On the frieze above each pilaster is an applied rosette, with four petals.

The upper part of the rounded arch is composed of a grid of square window openings. Beneath this is a center door flanked on each side by sidelights with small square windows. There is a cornice above the door and windows, and a bracketed pediment above the door. There is a medallion in the center of the pediment. Around 2000, the Chicago Park District installed hard awnings at the upper level in the three openings.

The north façade, which faces the swimming pool [7], is very similar in design to the south façade. It, however, does not have the swags, garlands and other ornamentation on its pediment. The upper portion of the rounded arch has a grid of square window openings like the north façade. Views of the south façade are obscured unless you are on the swimming pool deck.

Set back from the north and south facades of the gabled section of the field house are the north and south facades of the hipped roof part of the building. These facades are identical, and both sides of each façade, which extend symmetrically east and west from the center gabled section, are identical. The elements of these

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facades follow a simplified version of the vocabulary of elements found in the facades of the gabled section of the field house. The bays are divided by pilasters. The inner bays have large segmental arched windows above two smaller square windows. The out bay of each side has four square windows with union jack sash motifs.

The east and west facades of the building are also identical. They are composed of several components: the center entryways within the hipped roof portion of the building, flanked by flat roofed hyphens that connect to the long rectangular facades of the gabled part of the building. The gabled extensions are identical. They have paired elongated false windows at each extreme end. The five center bays are each divided by pilasters. Within each bay is an upper segmental arched window and a lower rectangular window. The flat roofed hyphens are one story sections. One of the hyphens has a band of union jack windows. The other has a secondary doorway which today includes a ramp providing access for disabled people. The center section of the east and west facades is within the hipped roof portion of the building. These facades are identical. They have a center pedimented doorway, and two bands of union jack windows.

Overall, the field house [6] retains good integrity. There are only a few major changes to the historic appearance of the building: the replacement of the original clay tile roofing with asphalt, the installation of hard awnings, and the painted exterior rather than the original exposed aggregate concrete.

The field house retains many historic interior features including original dark stained woodwork in several rooms, and the murals, *An Allegory of Recreation*, located in the women's gymnasium/auditorium. There are five mural panels located on the curved arch over the stage at the north end of the auditorium. The panels contain scenes related to indoor and outdoor recreation. The center mural depicts both men and women dressed in street clothes and athletic wear. "The idealized figures of young men and women are rendered robustly, with details of musculature."⁴ Flanking this are murals showing other scenes of both men and women and athletic equipment and outdoor activities. The final mural contains objects reflecting possible programming in the park such as a model airplane, a puppet theater, spinning wheel, checkerboard, and various other recreational props. "The artist, Chester Dryan (1904-1980), who directed classes and supervised mural painting in a studio in Washington Park, probably painted the mural there, with the assistance of his student artists."⁵

The site directly surrounding the field house today provides a visual context similar to the historic appearance. The General Plan [A] shows trees planted in triple formal rows just east and west of the northern gabled section of the building [6]. In a manner, consistent with the Trumbull Park planting plan, these appear to have been Siberian elms. Today, a number of the original elms survive, particularly along the east façade. Some shrubs were planted at the base of these trees in the late 1990s, but these shrub masses have not been well-maintained.

North of the field house are the swimming pool [7] and its surrounding concrete decking. The swimming pool [7] remains in its historic location, and configuration. The original terra cotta lined swimming

⁴ Mary Lackritz Gray, *A Guide to Chicago's Murals*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, 424

⁵ Ibid.

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tank, however, has long been replaced with a standard modern pool. North of the swimming pool are the service yard [8], maintenance building [9], and the boiler house [10].

The historic service yard [8] and boiler house [10] retain good integrity. Constructed in 1915, at the same time as the field house, these features look much as they did historically. The boiler house is composed of exposed aggregate concrete which has not been gunited or painted. It is a flat roofed, one-and-a-half story building with simple classically inspired details, such as inset square panels and pilasters. It has a tall round chimney stack. The building suffers from some deterioration such as cracking and spalling. Unlike many similar facilities in other south side neighborhood parks, this boiler house and service yard facility retains almost all of the original exposed aggregate walls that extend from the building to define the exterior yard space. They extend west from the boiler house and follow the same architectural vocabulary. Originally, a wooden tool shed was located east of the boiler house. The original maintenance building [9] was constructed of wood. In 1959, the maintenance building was demolished and replaced with a light-colored brick one-story maintenance building.

Historically, the landscape areas east and west of the field house, swimming pool, service yard, tool building, and boiler house were the women and men's open air gymnasiums [11 and 12]. Both were configured as long rectangular spaces culminating in an oval or elliptical shape at the south. The women's open air gymnasium [11] was on the west side. Historically, the women's open air gymnasium originally had trees planted in formal rows in the center, to provide a shady space, in which women could use the outdoor apparatus. Only a few of the original trees in the women's open air gymnasium survive, and today this area is very open.

As was typical in neighborhood park designs, the children's playground and wading pool were in the same area as the women's open air gym. The wading pool and sand courts [13], located just south of the women's gymnasium, formed the semi-circular southern end of the area. The park district replaced the original wading pool with a concrete spray pool. Although the circular basin is in the same location and configuration as the original wading pool, it is an entirely new element and none of the original concrete of the wading pool remains. In addition, the original paths forming the sand courts were removed over the last decade or so.

Just north of the spray pool area is a large soft-surface playground [14], which dates to 1989. Placed in what was originally the women's open air gymnasium, the rectangular structure is composed of plastic timbers forming a 2' wall seating area. The soft surface playground [14] is rectangular in configuration. It contains two swing sets, two slides and a climber.

There are three sets of tennis courts in the park. One of them is located north of the playground at the north end of the original women's open air gymnasium. This tennis court [15] does not appear in the 1917 plan [A], or in a 1919 plan for the Water System in Grand Crossing Park. A tennis court in this location, does however, appear in the 1915 Plan for Park Buildings with a Swimming Pool, Boiler House and Service Yard for Parks #15 and #16. Certainly by the late 1930s [B], the asphalt tennis court existed in this location, and remains here today [C].

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Grand Crossing Park, Cook County, Illinois

The tennis court on the northeast side of the park [16] does appear in the 1917 plan [A]. This was originally a clay court. In 1984, this tennis court was converted to asphalt. The new court remains in the historic location and conveys its earlier appearance despite the revised surfacing. Like the tennis courts on the northwest side of the park [15], the third court [17] did not appear in the 1917 plan, but is shown in the 1915 plan. This is located south of the men's open air gymnasium on the north side of the ball field. All three sets of tennis courts are surrounded by chain-link fencing, as they were historically.

The men's open air gymnasium [12] is located on the east side of the field house and swimming pool. With the exception of the loss of the most of the plantings, this area is well intact. The original men's running track [18] mirrors the semi-circular configuration of the wading pool and sand-cut outs on the west side of the field house. It has an oval configuration and is composed of sand. Today, the men's running track remains and continues to be utilized. In 1940, a basketball court [19] was placed in the center of the running track

Today, Grand Crossing Park continues to provide numerous and diverse recreational programs within a neighborhood park that strongly conveys its historic character. The influences of D.H. Burnham and Co. and the Olmsted Brothers upon South Park Commission in-house designers remain clear. Grand Crossing Park is missing many of its original formally planted trees, particularly in perimeter areas and the promenade area. In addition, newer tree plantings have not always respected the historic formality of the landscape design. Despite this and some deterioration of the field house, the park retains its original layout, spatial characteristics, grading and possesses integrity. The property retains a good deal of fabric and well-conveys its historic appearance. In addition to its value to the surrounding neighborhood as a historic place, Grand Crossing continues to function as a vital community and recreational center for Chicago's south side.

Grand Crossing Park List of Historic Resources

Contributing Resources

Field House (6)
Boiler House (10)

Buildings

Non-contributing Resources

Maintenance Building (9)

Sites

Landscape includes ball field (1), walkways (2), semi-circular terrace (3), drive (4), stairway (20), and service yard (8), Men's Open Air Gymnasium (12) and Women's Open Air Gymnasium (11)

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Grand Crossing Park, Cook County, Illinois

Structures

Swimming Pool (7)
Tennis Courts (15, 16, 17)
Running Track (18)
Basketball Court (19)

Spraypool and Sand Courts (13)
Soft-Surface Playground (14)

Objects

Flagpole (5)

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Grand Crossing Park, Cook County, Illinois

Statement of Significance

Grand Crossing Park meets with Criterion A and Criterion C for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. This locally significant property is among a second generation of neighborhood parks that were inspired by the South Park Commission's pioneering efforts, in the early 1900s, to provide breathing spaces with recreational programs and social services to densely populated tenement districts. Enjoying the great success of the first ten neighborhood parks that had opened to the public in 1905, the South Park Commission immediately set out to create similar parks throughout the south side. Purchasing land between 1907 and 1910, the South Park Commissioners hired the Olmsted Brothers to design the park in 1911. By the time the commissioners were ready to improve the park in 1914, the Olmsted Brothers' plans were not followed. Rather, in-house South Park Commission designers created new plans for the landscape and field house that were almost identical to Trumbull Park, which was conceived at the same time. Grand Crossing Park is locally significant for its architectural and landscape design, which exhibit the strong influences of the Olmsted Brothers, landscape architects, and D.H. Burnham and Company architects. Grand Crossing Park is also significant for its recreational and social history. The park's period of significance spans from 1912, when the South Park Commission made initial park improvements, to 1956, the current fifty-year cut-off date for the National Register of Historic Places. The park qualifies for listing under the multiple property documentation form, "The Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District."

The South Park Commission was one of three park systems, established in 1869, to create a series of parks and boulevards that would encircle Chicago. As explained in section E (page 3) of the multiple property nomination form "The Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District," the South Park Commission served a geographic region spanning from the Chicago River south to 138th Street and from Lake Michigan west to Cicero Avenue. Its jurisdiction included the towns of South Chicago, Lake, and Hyde Park. Its original parkland consisted of South Park (later renamed Jackson and Washington Parks and the Midway Plaisance) and boulevards linking the park to downtown and the West Park System.

By the late 1890s, the South Park Commissioners were concerned that the existing parkland could no longer satisfy the needs of all of the people they served. The city had experienced tremendous industrial growth and the population was surging. In 1869, when Chicago's original park commissions were formed, the city's population was 300,000. By 1900, that figure had increased to 1.7 million, and at that time nearly 750,000 people resided a mile away or farther from any park.⁶

Aware of the deplorable living and working conditions and lack of open spaces in the tenement districts within its jurisdiction, the South Park Commission drafted a bill that would empower it to build new parks for the first time in 30 years. The act, approved by the State Legislature in 1899, allowed for the creation of a new park if it were contiguous to an existing park or boulevard. The following year, the South Park Commission

⁶ Dwight Heald Perkins, *Report of the Special Park Commission to the City Council of Chicago on the Subject of a Metropolitan Park System*. Chicago: 1904, 39.

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acquired a 34-acre site adjacent to a boulevard, Western Avenue, and near the Union Stock Yards. Providing ball fields, swimming and wading lagoons with changing rooms, and playgrounds, the experimental McKinley Park proved to be an immediate success. This prompted the commissioners to begin efforts to create a whole system of neighborhood parks that would provide beautiful landscapes, recreational programs and social services to the densely populated neighborhoods throughout their district.

The South Park Commission secured enabling legislation in 1901, that would allow it to issue bonds to acquire and improve new parks. This law stipulated that the proposed parks could not be more than ten acres in size. In 1902, the commissioners brought the proposal before public referendum, receiving strong public support. The following year, the South Park Commission went to the State Legislature to amend the 1901 act. The amendment, known as the Lundberg Act, removed the size limitation, allowed the park commissioners to locate the new parks anywhere in their district, and authorized the issuance of bonds. With the legal authority and funding in place, the commission began to plan the new parks.

As explained in the multiple property form, South Park Commission Superintendent, J. Frank Foster, was largely responsible for conceiving the neighborhood park concept (FIII, p. 11). Foster believed that the new parks could function as neighborhood centers and uplift and improve the lives of the residents of the overcrowded tenement districts. He suggested that in addition to the ball fields, swimming facilities, and playgrounds that had been tested in McKinley Parks, the new parks should also a variety of features. These included separate outdoor gymnasiums for men and women, running tracks, children's sand courts, and a new type of building, the field house. Based on the precedent of Chicago's settlement houses, these innovative parks buildings "would provide athletic, educational, recreational programs and social services throughout an entire year."⁷ This was particularly useful because Chicago's cold climate had traditionally limited the use of the parks between the late fall and early spring.

The South Park Commission hired the Olmsted Brothers landscape architects and D.H. Burnham and Company architects to design the innovative system of fourteen parks. Both firms had a long tradition of designing for Chicago's South Park System. The Olmsted Brothers were successors to Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903). Designer of many of the nation's premier parks and landscapes including New York's Central Park and the town of Riverside Illinois, Olmsted created the original plan for Chicago's South Park in 1871. In 1875, his stepson and nephew, John Charles Olmsted (1852-1920) went into practice with him. Frederick Law Olmsted laid out the gleaming campus of the World's Columbian Exposition that opened in Jackson Park 1893. After the fair, the firm, then known as Olmsted, Olmsted, and Eliot transformed the site to back to parkland. In 1898, John Charles and his younger stepbrother, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. formed the Olmsted Brothers firm. The brothers went on to produce plans and landscape designs for thousands of sites throughout the nation.

Daniel H. Burnham (1846-1912), Chicago's renowned architect and planner, helped inspire the City

⁷ Julia Sniderman Bachrach, *The City in a Garden: A Photographic History of Chicago's Parks*, Center for American Places, Harrisonburg, VA: 2001, 12.

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Beautiful Movement throughout the nation and the world. Burnham formed an 18-year partnership with John Welborn Root in 1873, and the two produced hundreds of buildings and helped develop the Chicago School of Architecture. Burnham and Root designed several buildings for the South Park Commission including the stables and refectory buildings in Washington Park. Root died suddenly in 1891, while deeply involved in planning the World's Columbian Exposition. Burnham took over preparations for the fair and his firm became known as D.H. Burnham and Company. Burnham and architect Edward H. Bennett (1874-1954) authored the seminal *1909 Plan of Chicago*. Burnham's firm also produced city plans for Cleveland, San Francisco, and Manila. Bennett, who began working in Burnham's office in 1904, played a substantial role in the design of the field houses for the pioneering south side neighborhood parks.

The Olmsted Brothers and D. H. Burnham and Company had developed plans for fourteen parks in 1904. By the end of the summer in 1905, the South Park Commission had opened the first ten new parks to the public. (The development of the other four parks was delayed for various reasons.) The pioneering neighborhood park concept met with immediate approval. The new parks provided an array of services to their surrounding communities including English lessons, vocational training, inexpensive hot meals, and public bathing. Several of these parks even included the earliest branches of the Chicago Public Library. At the dedication of Davis Square, South Park Commission President Henry G. Foreman made a speech before very large audience, asserting his belief in the new park system and its moralistic influences:

... When you people who live in this part of Chicago come home tired at night, or when you have a holiday, or when you are tempted to do something wrong, come over here and listen to the music. Come and see your children work in the gymnasium; come and take a bath or swim, or see the trees and flowers. When you are hungry you can buy what you want to eat at what it costs us. If there is anything about this district that you don't like, call a meeting in this room and talk it over. Use this assembly hall freely for any good purpose, except for religious or political meetings.⁸

By the end of 1906, the branch libraries in the new neighborhood parks had an annual attendance of more the 600,000, the lunch-rooms served over 425,000 meals, the bathing facilities had been used more than 800,000 times, and the ten new parks had served more than 5 million people in congested south side districts.⁹

It was quickly apparent that the new south park prototype would soon provide a national model for park development. Descriptions of the new parks were published in many popular and professional magazines. The Olmsted Brothers promoted the concept through city planning groups and conferences. Daniel H. Burnham and Edward Bennett incorporated the concept in their 1905 San Francisco Plan,

⁸ "Chicago Has been Slow in Park Development—Recent Vital Awakening—Plans for a Wonderful System—Small Parks Already Established and Models of What a Park Should Be." *Chicago Tribune*, May 14, 1905.

⁹ *Annual Report of the South Park Commissioners for the Fiscal Year 1906*, Chicago: 1907, 59-61

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"and in the 1907 St. Louis City Plan, the published report of which contained illustrations of Chicago's small parks."¹⁰ When the Playground Association of America was planning its first annual conference that would take place in the summer 1907, the organization selected Chicago as the site of its meetings because of the example offered by the new South Park Commission sites. President Theodore Roosevelt, an honorary member of the organization, issued a national statement asking delegations to attend "...to gain inspiration" and "to see the magnificent system that Chicago has erected in its south park section, one of the most notable civic achievements in any American city."¹¹

While working on efforts to complete the construction of the four parks that had been delayed, the South Park Commission also began conceiving a second generation of neighborhood parks for underserved communities within its jurisdiction. Located at the south part of the district, these communities— Grand Crossing, Hegewisch, Irondale, and Burnside— were rapidly becoming well-populated working-class neighborhoods.

The Grand Crossing neighborhood takes its name from a terrible train wreck which occurred less than a mile away from what later became the site of the park. In the early 1850s, a number of railroad lines linking the southern United States to Chicago began extending through this neighborhood. In 1853, a collision between Illinois Central and Michigan Southern Railroad trains resulted in 18 deaths and 40 injuries. Public officials responded by forcing all trains to come to a complete stop at 75th Street and South Chicago Avenue, the site of the accident.

Previously part of Hyde Park Township, Grand Crossing was annexed to Chicago in 1889. Factory workers, farmers, and artisans settled in the community building small frame cottages. The Columbian Exposition (which took place nearby in Jackson Park) inspired growth, and single-family homes, two-flats, and apartment buildings soon filled the community. The community also had some factories and other businesses. The Electric Trolley Line and transit lines along South Chicago Avenue stimulated additional growth.¹² In 1912, tracks were finally elevated at the dangerous intersection in which the train crash had occurred.

In 1907, new state legislation passed allowing the South Park Commissioners to create new parks for the neighborhoods at the south end of their district. A *Chicago Tribune* article of that period asserted:

¹⁰ Joan E. Draper, "Park Planning in Chicago: Art and Science. The South Park District's Small Parks of 1902-1905 and Park Planning in the United States," *Planning the Twentieth Century American City*, Christopher Silver and Mary Corbin Sies, eds., Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, 102.

¹¹ As reprinted in South Park Commission, *Report of the South Park Commissioners For a Period of Fifteen Months from December 1, 1906 to February 29, 1908, inclusive*. Chicago: 1908, 62.

¹² Chicago Fact Book Consortium. *Local Community Fact Book Chicago Metropolitan Area: Based on the 1970 and 1980 Censuses*. University of Illinois at Chicago, 1984, 177.

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Nearly everything that has been said in favor of the small parks in the more thickly settled parts of the city applies with equal force to the outskirts. The citizens ... are working folk who live together in close quarters without many of the improvements which long years have brought to older parts of Chicago. They need recreation grounds for themselves and their children. They ought to have them soon.¹³

Property owners and residents of the Grand Crossing community began appearing before the South Park Board requesting the creation of a park for their area in 1907. The commissioners identified a tract of land located between 76th and 78th Streets and Dobson Street on the east and Ingleside Avenue on the west. They passed an ordinance on September 11, 1907 authorizing the acquisition of the land.¹⁴ The first official land purchase occurred in 1908, and the last was made on September 24, 1910.

The four parks that the South Park Commissioners began creating, in 1907, were each approximately 20 acres in size. After reviewing the success of the first 10 neighborhood parks which ranged from 8-acre to 60-acre sites, J. Frank Foster, Superintendent of the South Park Commission likely determined that 20 acres would provide the appropriate amount of space for the neighborhood park prototype. In August of 1910, the commissioners hired the Olmsted Brothers to prepared plans for the four parks, then known as Parks No. 15, 16, 17, and 18. (Park #15 was later renamed Grand Crossing Park.)

In April of 1911, the Olmsted Brothers completed a written report on the 20 acre playgrounds to accompany five plans prepared for Park No. 17 (later renamed Mann Park), but containing recommendations for all four parks.¹⁵ The report anticipated that the neighborhoods for which the four parks were planned would eventually become densely populated, and that the parks would need to serve the crowded surrounding districts:

The 20 Acre Playground is intended to serve as the social and recreation center for an urban unit of several hundred acres with a population that may total hundreds of thousands of persons. The area may be more than ample now, but will be more and more needed as the population increases, while the area remains fixed. The ultimate conditions will require that every inch of space must be put to the best possible use.¹⁶

The report suggested that as the neighborhoods grow, schools, public theaters, police stations and other municipal buildings might be constructed along the edges of the parks "to form large open courts

¹³ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 23, 1907.

¹⁴ Daniel Breen, ed. *Historical Register of the Twenty-Two Superseded Park Districts*, 1941,330.

¹⁵ Report on 20 Acre Playgrounds, Chicago, ILL., the Olmsted Brothers Associates Archives, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

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well protected from the streets and adapted to playground purposes.”¹⁷ It also suggested enclosing spaces and diminishing noise and dust from the surrounding neighborhood through the use of fences with a screen of trees and shrubs or placed on raised terraces. They referenced the Tuileries in Paris, as an example of these treatments.

The Olmsted Brothers recommended dividing the interior of the parks into at least three main sections: one with buildings and gymnasia, one with playgrounds and ball fields, and one “... with promenades, groves, bandstand, sheltered seats, gardens, and possibly fountains, for quiet and rest and the gentler form of amusements.”¹⁸

On June 14, 1911, J. Frank Foster, South Park Commission General Superintendent, presented the Olmsted Brothers Report on 20 Acre Playgrounds along with a series of preliminary plans to the Board of Commissioners. He recommended that one plan (Plan A) be adopted for Park 15 and Park 16 (Grand Crossing and Trumbull Parks) and that two other plans (Plans B and C) adopted for Park 17 (Mann Park) and Park 18 (Tuley Park).

The Olmsted Brothers refined Plan A and submitted another preliminary plan dated June 22, 1911 labeled Plan 8 for Park 15. (Very similar plans were developed for Park 16)¹⁹ This plan was organized into three major spaces with the ball field located on the north side of the park; architectural complex, swimming and wading pools in the center, and a passive lawn with tennis courts along the edges on the south side of the park.

On June 30, 1911, Commissioner Hutchinson moved that only one general plan should be adopted for all four parks (Preliminary Plan for #17, File 1930, no. 8). This plan had a central ball field, tear-drop shaped lawn on one end and rectangular ball field on the other end.²⁰ It was unusual for the South Park Commissioners to utilize the same design for more than one park. In fact, in planning the original system of fourteen parks the Olmsted Brothers had previously convinced the commissioners that it would be “undesirable to make these playgrounds substantially alike.”²¹ Although many of the original fourteen parks had sites of similar sizes and conditions, and all of their plans included a similar vocabulary of elements and facilities, each had its own unique design.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ There are a total of five Olmsted Brothers plans for Parks 15 and 16 in the Chicago Park District Special Collections and others in the collections of the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Brookline, MA.

²⁰ Elliott Foulds, Historic Landscape Architect, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, telephone interview conducted by Julia Sniderman, October, 1994—also referenced in Trumbull Park National Register for Historic Places Nomination Form.

²¹ Olmsted Brothers, Letter to Henry C. Foreman, President of the South Park Commissioners, December 7, 1903, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

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A couple of weeks after the commissioners adopted the general plan for the four parks, President Donnersberger received a letter from Senator A.C. Clark and E.P. Williams, President of the Grand Crossing Improvement Club, along with a petition from the official board of the Ingleside Avenue Methodist Episcopal Club requesting a revision to the plans for Grand Crossing Park. The community representatives suggested the placement of the ball field on the south side of the park rather than the north side as depicted in the plan. The reason they suggested this change was that the church was located on the north side of the park and the adjoining neighborhood was becoming increasingly dense. The petitioners preferred to have the passive lawns and shady areas on the north side.²² After conferring with the Olmsted Brothers, the commissioners agreed to make the change.²³

Despite approval of the plans, progress occurred slowly. In the summer of 1912, the commissioners began making only modest improvements such as some grading, laying sidewalks, and constructing a small shelter with toilet rooms in each of the four parks. In the winter of 1912, part of the Park #15's landscape was flooded for ice skating. The South Park Commission built a modest warming shelter and laid plank walks from the central gates of the park to the warming shelter. These walks were dismantled and stored each year for use in the following years.

Although the South Park Commission installed lighting and a flag pole in the park in 1913, community members were becoming impatient about the lack of other permanent improvements.²⁴ The Grand Crossing Business Men's Club submitted their suggestion to name the park in honor of the Grand Crossing community. The South Park Commissioners concurred with the idea and officially named the park at a board meeting held on July 16, 1913.²⁵

Delegations of community members continued to ask for improvements, particularly the construction of a field house with assembly halls, gymnasiums, and a swimming pool.²⁶ The commissioners responded by explaining that they expected to expend approximately \$112,000, in 1914, on park improvements and would seriously consider the community's wishes. This resulted in the development of plans for a large field house complex in Grand Crossing Park prepared by South Park Commission architects under the supervision of Engineer Linn White (1864-1949).

Linn White began working in the South Park Commission's engineering department in 1904, and was promoted to the position of chief engineer by 1909. He remained in this position until the consolidation of the Chicago Park District in 1934. He spent the following several years as consulting engineer to the Chicago Park District and retired in 1940. In a New York Times obituary, White was

²² Letter from EP Williams dated July 14, 1911 in Minutes of the South Park Commissioners, July 19, 1911, v. 16, p. 27.

²³ Minutes of the South Park Commissioners, July 19, 1911, v.16, p. 26.

²⁴ \$3,000,000 Spent by South Park Commissioners. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 31, 1913 and Minutes of the South Park Commissioners, February 19, 1913, v. 19, p. 332.

²⁵ Minutes of the South Park Commissioners, July 16, 1913, v. 20, p. 172.

²⁶ Minutes of the South Park Commissioners. May 20, 1914, v. 21, p. 145.

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described as a "leading figure in the negotiations with railroad that resulted in the 1919 ordinance for Chicago's downtown and South Side lake shore improvements."²⁷

The 1914 design of the Grand Crossing field house was clearly influenced by the D.H. Burnham and Company buildings of a decade earlier. White had begun his tenure with the South Park Commission in 1904, the year in which D.H. Burnham and Company had been commissioned to design the nation's earliest field houses. The original field houses were rendered in the neo-classical style, drawing from Burnham's supervision of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park. They were composed of exposed aggregate concrete, also known as "marblecrete" or "popcorn concrete." Considered an innovative building material at the time, the concrete structures could be constructed quickly, relatively inexpensively, and ornamentation could be molded directly into facades. Linn White became well versed expert in the use of concrete. In fact, he published an article entitled "The Treatment of Concrete Surfaces" in 1907.²⁸

Many of the buildings of the first ten neighborhood parks had been configured in complexes, often with the field house as the dominant structure and the gymnasium buildings behind it or flanking it on each side. "In several instances, the swimming tank was then placed within the outdoor complex."

evoking on a much smaller scale, the image of the White City's renowned Court of Honor.²⁹ Burnham's 1910 Fuller Park architectural complex placed the monumental field house in the center of the park and the gymnasium building to the north, creating an outdoor courtyard garden with a fountain and sand courts for children in between. The swimming pool was placed on the opposite side of the park, and was not part of the field house complex.

The Grand Crossing and Trumbull Park field houses, which had identical designs, were composed of concrete and rendered in a Neo-classical style. The building's plans, however, exhibited a departure from the Burnham-designed field houses. The structures were cruciform in plan, with a long rectangular building extending north to south and a central rectangular buildings extending east to west. Although the buildings had an impressive monumental design, the floor plans proved to be awkward—patrons who came from main entrance crossed from the lobby into the women's gymnasium and had to walk through either the men's or women's locker rooms to come to the other side of the building. Similarly, the secondary entrances on the sides led directly to the men's and women's locker rooms. In general, the majority of the building is devoted to gymnasiums and locker rooms, representing the South Park Commission's strong commitment to organized activities and sports during this era. Although a delegation of community members requested that a library be included in Grand Crossing Park's field

²⁷ *New York Times*, January 14, 1949.

²⁸ *The American Architect and Building News*, May 4, 1907.

²⁹ William W. Tippens and Julia Sniderman, 1989, 24.

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house in 1915, the commissioners did not follow the recommendation.³⁰

The estimated costs for Grand Crossing's field house was \$125,320.00. A full set of construction documents were prepared in March of 1915. Later that month, the South Park Commission board discussed correspondence received from Dr. Clemson of the Chicago Board of Education. The letter explained that a new technical high school was planned immediately west of the south half of Grand Crossing Park, and requesting the revision of an attached plan which showed the proposed field house at the south side of the park.³¹ Although the commissioners made a motion to approve the revision, it is apparent that the revision had already been made.

As the Olmsted Brothers had predicted in their report on 20-acre playgrounds, the school was planned to be adjacent to the park, providing opportunities for the joint use of the park by the students. At the time, the board was planning to name the new school in honor of a famous surgeon John B. Murphy; however, there was some controversy about the name.³² The Board did not construct the school until the mid 1920s. Built as a junior high school, it was named in honor of Emil G. Hirsch, a civic-minded rabbi who served on the Chicago Public Library Board as well as presidential elector at large for Illinois.³³

By 1917, the South Park Commission in-house designers had developed a revised plan for Grand Crossing Park's landscape. The scheme was identical to that of Trumbull Park, however; the two are mirror images of each other, with the placement of Trumbull Park's field house on the south side of the park rather than the north. Both plans have two major components, rather than the three exhibited by the Olmsted Brothers plans. Half of each park is composed of a sunken ball field. The other half places the monumental field house in the center, with the swimming pool behind it. East and west of the field house, the designers placed open air gymnasiums for men and women, with the children's playground on the women's side. Despite the departure from the original 1911 plans, the Olmsted Brothers' influence is clearly visible. The parks have a very formal lay-out with room-like spaces defined by straight rows of shrubs and trees. Elements such as a circular wading pool for children with sand courts and semi circular bench, men's oval running track, and concert grove which had all been included in the original Olmsted Brothers neighborhood parks were articulated here, too.

Historically, the concert grove was one of the loveliest features of the landscape design of both parks. Both had a central entrance drive lined with an allée of shade trees. This led to a raised promenade in a with steps leading down to the sunken ball field. The central allée had a grid of formally planted trees. In Trumbull Park, this central allée is composed entirely of ginkgo trees that remain intact

³⁰ Minutes of the South Park Commissioners, Jan. 20, 1915, v. 22, p. 20.

³¹ Minutes of the South Park Commissioners, March 31, 1915, v.22, p. 116.

³² "Trustees Dodge Dr. J.B. Murphy's Name for School," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 14, 1918.

³³ www.Jewishencyclopedia.com.

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today. In Grand Crossing, the trees were also very likely planted as a monoculture. Historic photos and three remaining trees indicate that the South Park Commission landscape designers planted linden trees in Grand Crossing Park rather than ginkgoes or elms. Photographs show that the formal trees remained in place until at least the early 1940s. In the early 1950s, the Chicago Park District developed two plans for this area. Neither plan indicates whether there were existing trees in the central allée at the time. The two plans proposed replanting the area with either American plain trees or pin oaks. It is difficult to ascertain what happened to the original trees because lindens are known to be hardy. If the Chicago Park District removed the trees to install a parking lot, which is the current function of the area, it seems odd that the plans were developed to formally replant the area. Neither plan, however, was executed.

By the late 1910s, Grand Crossing Park had become a vital part of the community. Children had attended the playground more than 40,000 times during the year of 1919.³⁴ The park's assembly hall was used by a total of more than 20,000 people the same year.³⁵ A *Chicago Tribune* article of 1922, described the attempts made by a small town girl from Wisconsin to find a place where "she could attend a decent community dance."³⁶ After contacting dozens of parks that either had no dances on Saturday nights or used the assembly halls to book private events, the young woman learned that at Grand Crossing Park, she was welcomed to attend a "...community dance, where the only requirement for admission was good conduct and a desire to dance."³⁷ She later reported that she "had a glorious time."³⁸ The park also became a favorite spot for concerts, festivals, and fetes. Many events such events, including annual 4th of July celebrations, were sponsored by the Eighth Ward Business Association, which later became known as the Grand Crossing Chamber of Commerce.

Grand Crossing Park has also long been a popular place for sports and active recreation. As early as 1917, the park was used for south side track meets. For decades the ball fields were used both for high school and semi-professional baseball.³⁹ Numerous gymnastic meets and exhibitions were also held in the park. The swimming pool was used more than 50,000 times during the summer,⁴⁰ not only for swimming lessons, but also for special events for groups such as boy scouts that included open swim, races, and water games.⁴¹ The park's three sets of tennis courts (some clay and some asphalt) also date to its early construction.

In 1925, the Chicago Public Schools began constructing the city's first junior high school on the

³⁴ South Park Commissioners, Report for a Period of Twelve Months from March 1, 1919 to February 29, 1920, inclusive, p. 50.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 51.

³⁶ "Parks Barred to Public Dancing Saturday Night: Most of 'Em Open Floors to Private Clubs," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jan. 22, 1922.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ "Semi-pro Games Today," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 28, 1924.

⁴⁰ South Park Commissioners, Report for a Period of Twelve Months from March 1, 1921 to February 28, 1922, inclusive, p.87.

⁴¹ "Triangle Scouts to Give Party for So. Shore Boys," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 21, 1932.

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western boundary of the park, on the site previously intended for a technical high school. Designed by architect Edgar Martin, the attractive brick and terra cotta building connects to Grand Crossing Park at Ingleside Avenue, allowing students to enter the park without having to cross a street. In 1928, students from Hirsch Junior High School attended a spring flag raising ceremony in the park.⁴² Hirsch was converted into a high school in 1933, and the students' use of the park continued. In fact, the Board of Education leased the park's gymnasiums.

By the early 1930s, there were 22 separate park districts operating simultaneously in Chicago, including the South Park Commission. The Great Depression rendered all of these independent agencies financially insolvent. To gain access to federal funding through President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, voters approved the Park Consolidation Act of 1934, through which all 22 agencies were unified into the Chicago Park District. Between 1935 and 1941, the newly consolidated Chicago Park District received more than \$82 million in federal funding through the WPA (Works Progress Administration) and PWA (Project Works Administration). State and city funds increased this total to more than \$100 million.⁴³ Using these funds, the park district made numerous improvements throughout the system, which then included 130 parks with a total of 83 field houses and 50 swimming pools.

Using WPA funds, the Chicago Park District made numerous improvements to Grand Crossing Park. These included rehabilitating the field house (and reconfiguring some interior rooms), reconditioning the ball fields and tennis courts, planting thousands of shrubs, replacing concrete steps, and constructing concrete steps from the locker rooms to the swimming pool.⁴⁴

In addition to funding park improvements, the Chicago Park District used federal relief funds to hire employees who provided park programming. Grand Crossing offered a large array of classes and activities during this period including social dancing; square dancing; orchestra, band, and choral groups; arts and crafts including weaving and model plane building; and Indian lore. One of the artists employed by the Chicago Park District during this period was Chester Dryan (1904-1980). Dryan served as an assistant to James Edward McBurney, the director of art for the Chicago Park District. Dryan supervised art classes held in the studio in the Washington Park Administration Building (now DuSable Museum) and "directed the painting of some park murals."⁴⁵ Dryan painted a mural composed of a series of five panels that are mounted on the proscenium arch of the stage in the auditorium (which also served as the women's gymnasium). Entitled *An Allegory of Recreation*, the date of the work is unknown; however, it is likely the mid-1930s. The panels, which fit nicely along the curved arch, explore the themes of work and leisure time.

⁴² "Flag to Fly in All Its Glory on 151st Birthday," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 14, 1928.

⁴³ Julia Sniderman Bachrach, *The City in a Garden: A Photographic History of Chicago's Parks*, Center for American Places, Harrisonburg, VA: 2001, 24.

⁴⁴ Chicago Park District Annual Reports 1935 - 1940.

⁴⁵ Mary Lackritz Gray, *A Guide to Chicago's Murals*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, 424

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Between the 1940s and the 1960s, in addition to the sports programs, Grand Crossing Park continued to host many dances, concerts and other special events. During this time, the crafts programs were also extremely popular. The park offered wood craft, millinery, lapidary, and photography classes. There were numerous clubs and exhibitions related to these and other activities, such as stamp collecting. In the 1960s, the Chicago Park District opened a senior citizens center in the park. Programming for seniors remained a priority and Grand Crossing Park continues to have an active senior citizens club today.

In the late 1950s, the community began to change. European immigrants and native whites moved out as large numbers of African Americans settled in the community. Between 1950 and 1960, "...the black population of Greater Grand Crossing from 6 percent to 86 percent."⁴⁶ In the midst of dramatic community change, the West Avalon Community Association, "a biracial group," successfully waged a campaign to downzone the neighborhood surrounding the park to protect it from overcrowding and blight.⁴⁷ Over the years, the African American population rose to approximately 98%. Despite demographic changes, the historic character of Grand Crossing Park and the surrounding community remain strong. The park continues to provide many of the same programs and facilities that it did during its earliest history, and despite some deterioration, Grand Crossing remains a valuable historic resource.

⁴⁶ Wallace Best, "Great Grand Crossing," *Encyclopedia of Chicago History*, The University of Chicago Press, 2004

⁴⁷ "Biracial Civic Group Wins in Rezone Fight," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Oct. 6, 1960.

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Grand Crossing Park, Cook County, Illinois

Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is bounded on the north by the south curb-line of W. 45th Street, on the south by the north curb-line of W. 46th Place, on the east by the west curb-line of S. Princeton Avenue, and on the west by the eastern portion of the Pittsburgh and Ft. Wayne Railroad right-of-way.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property is the plot of land historically associated with the park during its periods of significance.

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Grand Crossing Park, Cook County, Illinois

Photographs

Grand Crossing Park
Cook County, IL
Julia Bachrach
February 1, 2006
Chicago Park District
View of Field House looking northeast
Photo 1, Feature No. 6

Grand Crossing Park
Cook County, IL
Julia Bachrach
February 1, 2006
Chicago Park District
View of Field House, terrace, and ball fields looking north
Photo 2, Feature Nos. 1, 3, 5, 6, 20

Grand Crossing Park
Cook County, IL
Julia Bachrach
February 1, 2006
Chicago Park District
Close-up view of Field House looking north
Photo 3, Feature No. 6

Grand Crossing Park
Cook County, IL
Julia Bachrach
February 1, 2006
Chicago Park District
View of landscape near Field House looking northwest
Photo 4, Feature No. 6

Grand Crossing Park
Cook County, IL
Julia Bachrach
February 1, 2006
Chicago Park District
Interior view of auditorium looking north
Photo 5, Feature No. 6

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Section Additional Documentation Page 29

Grand Crossing Park, Cook County, Illinois

Grand Crossing Park
Cook County, IL
Julia Bachrach
February 1, 2006
Chicago Park District
View of stairs and knee wall looking southwest
Photo 6, Feature No. 20

Grand Crossing Park
Cook County, IL
Julia Bachrach
February 1, 2006
Chicago Park District
View of spraypool looking northwest
Photo 7, Feature No. 13

Grand Crossing Park
Cook County, IL
Julia Bachrach
February 1, 2006
Chicago Park District
View of men's outdoor gymnasium looking southeast
Photo 8, Feature Nos. 18, 19

Grand Crossing Park
Cook County, IL
Julia Bachrach
February 1, 2006
Chicago Park District
View of boiler house looking southwest
Photo 9, Feature Nos. 10



City of Chicago
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Department of Planning
and Development

Lori T. Healey
Commissioner

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Tracy A. Sculle
Survey & National Register Coordinator
Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
1 Old State Capitol
Springfield, IL 62702

Re: **Chicago nominations to the National Register of Historic Places for**
• **Thomas Jefferson Memorial Park, 4822 N. Long Ave.,**
• **Eugene Field Park, 5100 N. Ridgeway, and**
• **Grand Crossing Park, 7655 S. Ingleside**

Dear Ms. Sculle:

This is in response to your letters of April 18, 2006, to Mayor Richard M. Daley and the Commission on Chicago Landmarks asking for the Commission's comments on the nominations of the properties referenced above to the National Register of Historic Places. As a Certified Local Government (CLG), the City of Chicago is given the opportunity to comment on local nominations to the National Register prior to being considered by the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council.

At its regular meeting of June 1, 2006, the Commission voted unanimously to support the National Register listings for all three nominations. The Commission's resolution is attached.

Please contact Terry Tatum of my staff at 312-744-9147 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Brian Goeken
Deputy Commissioner
Landmarks Division

Originated by:

Terry Tatum
Director of Research
Landmarks Division

encl.

cc: Alderman Patrick J. Levar, 45th Ward
Alderman Margaret Laurino, 39th Ward
Alderman Todd Stroger, 8th Ward
Julia Bachrach, Chicago Park District
Arnold Randall, Chicago Park District
Lori T. Healey, DPD
Judy Minor-Jackson, DPD
Wendy W. Williams, DPD
Danita Childers, DPD
Val Zillig, DPD
Lynette Wilson, Ref. # 06-00720846



Resolution
by the
Commission on Chicago Landmarks
on the
Nominations to the National Register of Historic Places
for

Thomas Jefferson Memorial Park, 4822 N. Long Ave.,

Eugene Field Park, 5100 N. Ridgeway,

and

Grand Crossing Park, 7655 S. Ingleside

June 1, 2006

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks finds that:

- Thomas Jefferson Memorial Park, Eugene Field Park, and Grand Crossing Park are all significant for their histories as Chicago neighborhood parks and exemplify the importance of such parks in the history of Chicago neighborhoods; and
- All three parks are locally significant and eligible for listing to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A and C for Entertainment/Recreation and Architecture; and
- Thomas Jefferson Memorial Park and Eugene Field Park are also eligible for listing to the National Register under Criterion A for Social History; and
- Grand Crossing Park is also eligible for listing to the National Register under Criterion C for Landscape Architecture.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks that it hereby supports the listing of all three nominations to the National Register of Historic Places.



**Illinois Historic
Preservation Agency**

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Richard M. Daley, City of Chicago
Brian Goeken, Landmarks Division, Department of Planning and
Development

FROM: Tracey A. Sculle, Survey and National Register Coordinator *TAS*

DATE: April 17, 2006

SUBJECT: Preliminary Opinion on Grand Crossing Park in Chicago, Illinois

Grand Crossing Park located at 7655 South Ingleside Avenue (mailing address) is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under the Multiple Property Documentation Form, entitled "The Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District." The park is bounded on the north by East 76th Street, on the south by East 78th Street, on the east by South Dobson Avenue and the west by South Ingleside Avenue. The park is locally significant and meets Criteria A and C for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for the following areas of significance: Entertainment/ Recreation, Architecture, and Landscape Architecture. The period of significance for Grand Crossing is from 1912 to 1956, the fifty-year cutoff for National Register significance. The park was designed by in-house South Park Commission designers, as part of the second generation of neighborhood parks that were developed in the city. Grand Crossing retains sufficient integrity to convey both its historic and architectural significance and will be an excellent addition to the National Register of Historic Places.

WEEKLY LIST OF ACTIONS TAKEN ON PROPERTIES: 8/07/06 THROUGH
8/11/06

KEY: State, County, Property Name, Address/Boundary, City, Vicinity, Reference Number, NHL,
Action, Date, Multiple Name

CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES COUNTY,

Santa Anita Park,
285 W. Huntington Dr.,
Arcadia, 06000672,

DETERMINED ELIGIBLE, 8/03/06

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,

Eugene Field Park,
5100 N. Ridgeway Ave.,
Chicago, 06000677,

LISTED, 8/08/06
(Chicago Park District MPS)

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,

First Congregational Church of Western Springs,
1106 Chestnut St.,
Western Springs, 06000673,
LISTED, 8/08/06

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,

Grand Crossing Park,
7655 S. Ingleside Ave.,
Chicago, 06000678,

LISTED, 8/08/06
(Chicago Park District MPS)

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,

Jefferson Park,
4822 N. Long Ave.,
Chicago, 06000679,

LISTED, 8/08/06
(Chicago Park District MPS)

ILLINOIS, LAKE COUNTY,